

United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + UNHCR condemns refusal by warring parties to allow humanitarian convoys to reach Maglaj-Tesanj pocket in Bosnia and Herzegovina; trucks blocked by Bosnian Serbs forced to return to base today.
- + United Kingdom sending 900 troops to reinforce UNPROFOR, citing positive developments and growing needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- + Committee on Racial Discrimination asks Israel to report by 30 June on measures to guarantee safety of Palestinians in occupied territories; examines ethnic unrest in Burundi.
- + Secretary-General's report says communications mechanism developed by Commission on Status of Women is "early warning system" for policy questions.
- + Secretary-General urges international community to accelerate flow of aid for reconstruction in Cambodia.
- + Special Committee on United Nations Charter grants observer status to Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Syria; OAU to participate in debate on cooperation with regional organizations.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, today condemned the refusal by warring parties to allow humanitarian convoys to reach tens of thousands of people trapped for months in the Maglaj-Tesanj pocket of north-central Bosnia. Ten trucks trying to reach Maglaj were forced to return to base today after being blocked for three days by Bosnian Serbs. No UNHCR convoy has reached the town since last October.

"Getting help to these people is a priority, and we call on the international community to join us in putting pressure on all sides to cooperate so that the terrible suffering can end," said Ms. Ogata. "In the past few weeks, the delivery of humanitarian aid has improved over most of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but Maglaj stands out as a stark exception."

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The United Kingdom today announced that it would send a battalion of 900 troops to reinforce the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Central Bosnia. Advance elements of the battalion, which will include engineers, signals and support troops and a reconnaissance squadron, will arrive in Split by tonight. The United Kingdom currently has 2,450 personnel deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United Kingdom said that following recent positive developments on the ground, UNPROFOR's task had expanded greatly and its resources had become over-stretched in Sarajevo and Central Bosnia. Reinforcement had become an immediate issue for the United Nations, and the decision to deploy an additional battalion was the United Kingdom's response.

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The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has asked Israel to report to it by 30 June on measures to guarantee the safety of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israel is also to report on its efforts to disarm Israeli settlers and to end their illegal actions. The Committee took that decision, at a meeting in Geneva on Monday, in light of the recent massacre of Palestinian worshippers in Hebron.

Yesterday, the Committee examined the situation in Burundi, describing ethnic unrest there as "catastrophic". The country's representative said ethnic violence had remained taboo to the authorities for years because they had denied the existence of ethnic groups. The Country Rapporteur and expert from India said that the enormity of the warfare in Burundi overshadowed the crises in Bosnia, Angola and Somalia. However, reform of the army, an end to arms trafficking, the consolidation of the democratic process, and repatriation of refugees would lead to peace and reconstruction.

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The Commission on the Status of Women has been expanding its communications mechanism with a view to implementing forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, which were adopted in Nairobi. In a report dated 1 March, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali outlined the steps taken by the Commission to publicize that mechanism, which was different from the one used by the Commission on Human Rights.

The Secretary-General noted that the Commission sought to provide individuals and organizations with a means of informing it about patterns of injustice and discrimination against women which could result in new policy measures. It used confidential and non-confidential communications from those individuals and organizations detailing complaints, protests and requests for action, or suggestions and offers of cooperation. He described the communications mechanism as a form of "early warning system" on policy questions. It also made it easier for women, who were not always well represented in Governments, to bring their concerns before the Commission.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has urged the international community to respond speedily and effectively to help Cambodia in the task of nation-building. He said donors should accelerate the flow of technical, financial, and other aid to the Cambodian Government, and to provide it in a coherent and coordinated manner. He made that appeal in a message to the second meeting of the International Committee on the Reconstruction of Cambodia, being held in Tokyo today and tomorrow.

The Secretary-General hailed the rebirth of a new Cambodia. After last May's successful election, a new democratic Constitution had been adopted and a new Government established, with His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk as Head of State. Cambodia had reemerged as a sovereign, independent nation dedicated to peace and a better future, but the task of reconstruction had only just begun. He said the work of the Reconstruction Committee reaffirmed the commitment of the international community and the United Nations to the Cambodian people.

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The Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization today granted observer status to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Syria. The Special Committee also decided to permit the participation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in its consideration of the question of enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

The Special Committee is mandated to examine issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations.

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